



Press Release

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By: Maj. Guy Hayes

Alaska National Guardsmen in Mongolia for aviation maintenance exchange

ULAANBAATAR, Mongolia – Four Alaska National Guardsmen are in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, March 4 – 7 for an aviation maintenance exchange to educate Mongolian Air and Air Defense Force members on the C-130 Hercules aircraft.

In conjunction with the National Guard State Partnership Program, the exchange is focused on providing guidance on the required maintenance and operation of the C-130 Hercules, an aircraft the Mongolian Air and Air Defense Force hope to purchase to provide much needed airlift capability to their armed forces.

"We are so happy you are here," said Maj. Enkhzorgol Baatarkhuu, staff officer for the Mongolian Air and Air Defense Force. "We hope this exchange expands our mutual understanding, strengthening military cooperation between our two countries. We are very interested in transport aircraft for Pacific region operations, and our hope is we can purchase the C-130J because it will be very useful for our future."

As the first exchange between the two countries to discuss C-130 capabilities and maintenance requirements, the Alaska Guardsmen traveled to Mongolia to share their knowledge and bolster the National Guard State Partnership Program that has partnered the state of Alaska and Mongolia since 2003.

"This exchange is really important because the people here have been trying to rebuild their Air Force since the decline of the Soviet era," said Lt. Col. David McPhetres, director of operations, Alaska Air National Guard. "This exchange will help the Mongolians build a proposal that they can take through their government, so that in the next five to 10 years, they'll hopefully be able to build a program that allows them to have their own transportation in and out of the country, while utilizing our expertise to staff, train and have a safe and capable program."

In a country as vast and open as Alaska, the Mongolian Air and Air Defense Force is tasked with transporting Mongolian Armed Forces, but with only Soviet-era helicopters that include the MI-24B, MI-8T and MI-171E, they lack the capacity to transport large numbers of personnel, making it impossible to meet all their mission requirements.

"This is a great professional exchange for us," said 1st Lt. Bayasgalan Baljinnyam, platoon commander, Unit 337 Nalaikh Air Base, Mongolian Air and Air Defense Force. "Our national Air Force needs a C-130 because we need to participate in every mission and right now we have to call on civilian aircraft to transport our troops. We need to have our own C-130 so we can manage ourselves and transport our own troops to other countries."

With a current request to obtain three C-130J aircraft, the aircraft maintenance exchange has provided an engaging opportunity for Mongolian enlisted personnel and officers to pick the brain of two Alaska Air National Guard crew chiefs on the ins and outs of C-130 maintenance and performance.

"We've been flying the C-130 in the Alaska Air National Guard for a long time, and we've learned a lot of lessons in maintenance that we can teach the Mongolians," said Senior Master Sgt. Ken Joyce, 176th Wing C-130 maintenance supervisor, Alaska Air National Guard. "We can help them, so they don't have to repeat things we've already been through."

"Nobody really does it better than the 176th Wing, Alaska Air National Guard, and they are really going to benefit working with us because we have some of the best maintainers in the Air Force," said Master Sgt. Pat McGrain, C-130 crew chief, Alaska Air National Guard. "They've worked on a lot of Soviet-era equipment, but they still have a lot of the same set up that we do as far as maintenance and standards. I think the C-130 will do very well here because everyone we've met has been an outstanding mechanic and officer."

Capable of operating from rough dirt strips and short runways, the C-130 is the prime transport for airlifting troops and equipment into remote areas while operating in extremely harsh weather conditions. This makes the C-130 the perfect fit for Mongolia because it has already proven itself in similar conditions in Alaska.

"The landscape and mission are very similar in Mongolia compared to Alaska," McGrain said. "They perform search and rescue and airlift like we do, and the austere conditions, weather and terrain are very similar to Alaska. So I think the things that make the C-130 successful in Alaska will make it successful here."

Meeting Mongolian people who are incredibly friendly and hospitable, the exchange has been a rewarding experience for everyone involved and has laid the groundwork for future communication through the National Guard State Partnership Program.

"I think this exchange is a great opportunity to build relationships with their maintenance personnel," Joyce said. "We'll have constant communication back and forth and if they have questions on C-130s, we're only a phone call or email away."

"It's really great you visited our country," said Lt. Col. Bolor Ganbold, senior signal officer, Mongolia Air and Air Defense Force. "This is a great experience learning about the C-130 and a nice partnership. Thank you very much for visiting and sharing your experience about the C-130; we welcome you back again."

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Photo Cutlines:

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Lt. Col. David McPhetres, director of operations for the Alaska Air National Guard and C-130 command pilot with more than 3,000 flying hours, educates Mongolian Air and Air Defense Force members on the operation capabilities of the C-130 during an aviation maintenance exchange in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, March 5. Photo by Maj. Guy Hayes, Alaska National Guard Public Affairs

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Mongolian Air and Air Defense Force members and Alaska Air National Guard members discuss C-130 aviation maintenance during an aviation maintenance exchange March 6 at Nalaikh Air Base, Mongolia. In conjunction with the National Guard State Partnership Program, the exchange is focused on providing guidance on the required maintenance and operation of the C-130 Hercules, an aircraft the Mongolian Air and Air Defense Force hope to purchase to provide much needed airlift capability to their armed forces. Photo by Maj. Guy Hayes, Alaska National Guard Public Affairs

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Alaska Air National Guardsmen Lt. Col. David McPhetres, left, and Master Sgt. Pat McGrain, center, discuss C-130 operations and maintenance with Mongolian Maj. Enkhzorgol Baatarkhuu during an aviation maintenance exchange in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, March 4. Photo by Maj. Guy Hayes, Alaska National Guard Public Affairs

130305-F-ZH346-003

Alaska Air National Guard Senior Master Sgt. Kenneth Joyce gives Alaska Air National Guard unit patches to Mongolian Air and Air Defense Force aircraft maintenance personnel while touring facilities and viewing aircraft at Chinggis Khaan Air Base, Mongolia. Joyce and three other Alaska Air National Guardsmen are in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, March 4 – 7 for an aviation maintenance exchange to educate Mongolian Air and Air Defense Force members on the C-130 Hercules. Photo by Maj. Guy Hayes, Alaska National Guard Public Affairs

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Alaska Air National Guard Lt. Col. David McPhetres speaks to Mongolian Air and Air Defense Force aircraft maintenance personnel while touring facilities and viewing aircraft at Nalaikh Air Base, Mongolia. McPhetres and three other Alaska Air National Guardsmen are in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, March 4 – 7 for an aviation maintenance exchange to educate Mongolian Air and Air Defense Force members on the C-130 Hercules. Photo by Maj. Guy Hayes, Alaska National Guard Public Affairs

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Four Alaska Air National Guardsmen and members of the Mongolian Air and Air Defense Force stand in front of a Mongolian Armed Forces MI-8T helicopter while touring facilities on Nalaikh Air Base, Mongolia, March 6. The Alaska Guardsmen are in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, March 4 – 7 for an aviation maintenance exchange to educate Mongolian Air and Air Defense Force members on the C-130 Hercules. Photo courtesy of the Mongolian Air and Air Defense Force